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Correspondence.

PARIS, 15th September, 1855.

In the midst of the wonders of light and color which fill the English department of the Exposition, curiosity as well as sympathy have no doubt been excited for the Pre-Raphaelites. We have been acquainted with this name in France for a long time, but were ignorant of the thing itself, as no picture of the new school had as yet crossed the Straits. You will easily comprehend, then, how the pictures of Millais and Holman Hunt, as soon as visible, became at once the objects of universal interest as well as of warm discussion.

Millais has sent to the Exposition three pictures, which are not equally admired. They all command attention, however, by the novelty of their aspect and their truly wonderful execution. The "Order of Release," and the "Return of the Dove to the Ark," are preferred to the "Ophelia." To judge by his pictures, it would seem as if the main idea of Millais was to render physical nature in its most perfect detail; he studies everything and paints everything with the fidelity of a portrait. In the "Order of Release," the figure of the soldier is a complete illusion, and in the foreground of the "Dove" are some scraps of straw, so real, that birds might be deceived, and come to gather them to build a nest with. Millais takes no less pains in expressing the roundness of form and the painting of the fresh rosy flesh of women and children: it is perceptible that nature is his only guide,—his faithful, constant study.

I must say frankly that Millais appears to be very skillful in the representation of real objects, but in regard to sentiment he seems to be less happy. The "Ophelia" is a picture full of charming details; the landscape is sparkling and green; the flowers and weeds that deck the bank are perfectly true, the drapery of Ophelia is rendered with as much truth as elegance, and yet this combination of excellences is too brilliant for the eye, and the French declare that Ophelia is drowning too joyously. It appears to them that in the general effect of the work, Millais has not confined himself sufficiently to the painful sentiment of Shakespeare. The efforts of this master, however, are acknowledged here; three months ago, he was scarcely known to more than ten or twelve persons in Paris; now he enjoys an extensive reputation.

Mr. Holman Hunt has been less fortunate. His principal picture, "The Light of the World," has not succeeded. You are acquainted with the subject: it is Christ wandering at night with a lantern in his hand, and knocking at every door in order to illuminate all hearts with the rays of salvation. This picture has no reality, and the effect of light is much more odd than true. The excellences of Art are more visible in the scene of "Claudio and Isabella," taken from Measure for Measure: here at least the poetical originality of the figures agrees with the sentiment of the drama. Hunt exhibits also "Lost Sheep," which, notwithstanding the defects of perspective, places him among the number of the most patient and faithful of artists.

The two painters named above stand alone as representatives, in the Exposition, of the aims and tendency of the Pre-Ra-

phaelite school. By their side is the group of Royal Academicians; whose pictures have an agreeable color, and which enable one to judge very satisfactorily the strength of the English school. The English, I must say, are not conspicuous for pictures of high art. The President of the Academy, Sir Charles Eastlake, aims to show us what the English school was, when following in the footsteps of Benjamin West, it tried to walk in the cheerless track of Antique Art. "The Spartan Isadas repelling the Thebans," is one of the feeblest descriptions of pictures, and it would only obtain an *accessit* (which in English may be expressed by "next door to a prize"), at the competition in our Ecole des Beaux Arts. In the "Pilgrims," the color and sentiment are better. But "Sir Eastlake" only shows what he really is, in La Sveglarina, an exquisite picture, in which the charming color reminds you of the happy manner of Bonington.

Mulready, always fortunate in the choice of his subjects, displays rare perceptions, and a profound knowledge of expression, no matter whether it be in comic subjects or in subjects more particularly graceful. "The Choice of a Wedding dress," "The Discussion," "The End," are pictures of admirable execution, although the coloring of his flesh is not absolutely true. In the "Bathers" there is such an intimate knowledge of form, and such careful modelling, that, although feeble in some other matters, it must inspire all who know the difficulties of Art, with profound respect. The masterpiece of Mulready is "The Wolf and the Lamb," or, in other words, the figure of a schoolboy, tall, nervous, and strong, bullying the weakest of his comrades. The expressions are perfect in this composition: it is harmoniously colored, and made up of those quiet and just tones which one loves to dwell upon in the Dutch masters. Mulready is remarkable for skill and taste, and, above all, for his conscientiousness.

A painter beyond comparison is Francis Grant. The "Rendezvous of Ascot Hunt," from the opening day, won the most captious connoisseurs. In the foreground of a landscape, whose receding lines extend to a vast horizon, the hunting companions of the queen are gathered together ready for a stag-hunt. All the gentlemen who belong to the court are there dressed in red coats, and mounted upon superb horses, which are at once the glory and honor of the sporting world; before these an impatient dog is barking. This picture is in perfect keeping—the dogs and horses are admirably painted, and, as to the hunters, they are all faithful characteristic portraits. It seems to us that Francis Grant must be one of the most skillful portrait-painters of England. His portraits of Lord John Russell and of Ladies Beaulieu and Rodney, are treated with excellent taste.

The reputation of Sir Edwin Landseer, as a painter of animals, is spread throughout all Europe—owing, no doubt, to the numerous engravings from his pictures. The "Animals at the Forge," "The Drovers," and "The Breakfast," are works of true value in regard to spirit and sentiment, but they are unfortunately executed in a cold tone and somewhat grey, which destroys their lively effect.

It is necessary to name among the painters of familiar scenes, Goodall, Webster, Leslie, Frith and Elmore. There is much light and effect in the landscapes of Creswick, of Linnell, and, above all, of Pyne, who exhibits a "View of Heidelberg," of a charming, poetic, aspect.

You will easily comprehend that in the midst of an Exposition so full, I can mention but a few names and works. What is essential to remark is, in the English school, the relative importance of the Pre-Raphaelites, with Millais at the head of that department. France, I must say, has been impressed with their bold aim, and, I have no doubt, the new theory will soon have followers among us. It is thus that ideas are interchanged, and it is thus that progress is made. The Universal Exposition will have this effect—that of teaching us what the force of contemporary Art is, and where we should extend our sympathies.

MANTZ.

The praise of friends (and that was not wanting) never got a better approval than a doubtful shake of the head; and in the happiest of his works he always saw room for improvement, and said he hoped to do better yet. He was ever inquiring into the use and nature of colors, and was so much pleased with a book by Imbottson on the use of oil colors, that he copied the whole work, which was rather rare at the time, with his pen, and mixing his palettes according to the counsel of the author, communicated that grey leaden hue to some of his early works, which is observable even in the Blind Fiddler.—*Life of Wilkie.*

I HAVE got acquainted with some of the students, who seem to know a good deal of the cant of criticism, and are very seldom disposed to allow anything merit that is not two hundred years old. I have seen a great many very fine pictures of the old school, which have given me a taste very different from that which I had when I left Edinburgh, and I am convinced now that no picture can possess real merit unless it is a just representation of Nature.—*Wilkie.*

THE VILLAGE POLITICIANS.—The impression which The Village Politicians made on all ranks was deep and abiding. At the dinner with which the Royal Academicians open their Exhibition—a dinner given to the prime of the land for rank and talent—the generous Mr. Angerstein was so moved by the excellence of Wilkie's picture, that, declaring it had all the spirit of Teniers and the humor of Hogarth—he pointed it out to the company as the star of the collection. Nor did the very precise way in which the Earl of Mansfield had behaved to the young painter lessen its merits. All who saw it felt that a picture of the first order had been obtained for a sum not equal to the interest of the money it was worth; nor is it improbable that a little envy mingled with their strictures. The Royal Academy, as a body, was far from insensible to the merits of the performance, though some did not find in it the principles of that high Art, which the professors found easier to preach than practice. Northcote openly designated the style of Wilkie the Pauper Style; and Hazlitt, a little of a painter and esteemed as a critic, re-echoed the snappish saying. Nor was Fuseli silent: he pointed to the picture, and said to Wilkie, in his own enigmatic way, "Young man that is dangerous work." "Ay, ay," said Wilkie, "Really now?" "That picture will either prove the most happy or the most unfortunate work of your life."—*Life of Wilkie.*